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CHURCH AND THE MILLION.

No. V.

DURHAM AND THE CARPET WEAVERS.
MASTER AND MAN.

A LETTER
ADDRESSED TO MESSRS. HENDERSON AND Co.

BY THE

REV. EDWARD MONRO,

INCUMBENT OF HARROW WEALD, MIDDLESEX,
AUTHOR OF "PAROCHIAL WORK," "HARRY AND ARCHIE," ETC.

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A LETTER.

DEAR MESSRS. HENDERSON,

The truly kind and confiding manner in which you have received me on more than one occasion at the scene of your works in Durham, added to the hearty welcome that has been given me by the men in your employment, induces me to address the following remarks to you, and to make the condition of your workmen the opportunity of saying a word or two about the condition of the operatives generally who are concerned in employment of something of the same description.

1. One thing I am much struck with ; the more I have seen of the working populations of England the more evident it is to me that there is a distinctive feature and individuality of character, mode of thought and habit of life in each separate body of men, which seems to spring out partly from their peculiar occupation and partly from certain local circumstances which may have given birth to that occupation.

Man is in some respects the same everywhere ; and the working man of course has certain striking features of similarity with his fellow workmen which are inalienable from his very position, and which give him a claim upon all those who lead a similar life to his own to be recognised by them as brothers.

But while this is the case the separate and distinguishing features are very striking, and it appears evident that in proposing any remedial processes for existing evils, whether moral or social, one of the first things to be done is to consider the peculiar circumstances of each body of workmen in order to see what specialty of remedy should be applied to their case.

One error, which has been very prominent in the working of religion in the last two or three centuries in this country, has been that unwillingness to dive deeply into the structure of the human

soul and disposition, and to make, as it were, a science of the laws to be imposed upon the conduct of those whom we advise. An extreme and somewhat sensitive dread of casuistry and of the system which has been hitherto so prevalent in certain portions of the Church has led to a great alarm among our Anglo-Saxon preachers of morality and religion at any approach to reducing the human soul to scientific rule. But it is a mistake, and must, I imagine, in the long run lead to very fatal results. It would be as unreasonable to expect that we should as successfully gain the ends of health and convalescence for the thousands of sick and wounded in the metropolis by having half-a-dozen hospitals open of a general nature only, the practitioners in which had never immediately directed their attention to any one particular phase of human disease, as we should if there were a separate hospital and separate treatment under a distinct class of physicians for the disease of the eye, the sufferings of the oppressed mind, the peculiar phases of epidemic, smallpox, typhus fever, or influenza. As the great science of managing successfully the sanitary arrangements made for our masses of population advances, we see the mode of treatment becomes more and more broken up into individual and special processes.

I would apply the same mode of treatment to the mind and moral condition of man, and most especially to that very important body that represents the manufacturing populations, especially of the north and the middle of England. For instance, the fisherman on the coast will have in his character a certain recklessness and tendency to superstition and a deep natural affection giving him a niche in the great temple of the human race, which is all his own. The collier that works under ground will have very much of the same recklessness to danger and the same absence of a keen sense of peril, but he will show less superstition, a greater inclination to discuss religious points freely, and to accept the latitudinarianism of dissent rather than the more narrow and less intelligible tenets of a more dogmatical form of truth. The cotton operative will usually betray considerable independence of character and a certain indifferentism of manner when you converse with him, which has been to a great degree brought about by the fact of his working with mates in one shed and under one roof, where the friction of mind with mind has produced a result which solitary or more separate labour can never do. In the pottery districts of Staffordshire we shall find a lower order of intelligence, when we compare their inhabitants with those to which I last referred in Manchester or Preston; at the same time, there will be a greater appreciation of works of art and a tendency to the cultivation rather of the imagination and of the imitative faculties from the circumstance of these men having for the subject matter of their daily employment the beauties of form and the splendour of colour.

All this will give to the higher order of the potter a character quite his own and a position in English society which no one will venture to dispute with him.

In taking this rapid glance of the various forms of labour it would be wrong not to come for a moment south and to recollect that in the glove trade of Woodstock and Yeovil and other places where the manufacture of that article is followed we shall find a certain dulness of general intellect and a tendency to a depraved morality, arising very much in the case of Woodstock from the state of the original race of population which occupies that portion of Oxfordshire. At the same time there is a tendency to inebriety, arising from the drought created by the dry dust, which continually rising from the leather causes a distressing dryness in the throat and often leads to early consumption and forms of asthma.

2. Amongst your own workmen in Durham I have again noticed distinctive and certainly no despicable features which appear to belong especially to those who are at work on the carpet trade of England. Amongst those members of the trade I have come across connected with your factory I have traced results in their character and modes of thought and expression, which may arise not only from their occupation, but also from the peculiar local advantages which they may enjoy. But, as I said just now, these local advantages or disadvantages must be taken into the consideration of the philanthropist or of any one who in any way comes forward to attempt a remedy for the existing evils of English society.

It is impossible for any one to visit Durham without being struck with the amazing facilities and opportunities arising alike from nature and art, as from the arrangements and provisions of man, which constitute that city one of peculiar fitness for the congregation of large bodies of intelligent persons and for bringing to bear upon those bodies the loftiest and most wholesome influences. Your city rises before the eye of the traveller commanding the position of the capital of the north; and if certain local advantages, of which no northern traveller can be ignorant can create in Newcastle a rival to Durham, I am by no means sure that the latter city with its lofty eminences, its deep and beautiful river channelling the valleys that sweep around the aged cathedral, the singular picturesqueness and isolation of the city itself would not lay a higher and more successful claim to pre-eminence than that marvellous murky valley of the Tyne, on either brow of which the enormous town leans, emphatically the offspring and the victim of the subterranean energies which have given birth to her existence.

Nature does much in forming the character of man. Who can doubt it? and although there are counteracting causes of every description, the whole history of the formation of character is frequently a balance of different influences; the bright green field studded with the buttercup in early spring, the carol of the blackbird

and the midnight song of the nightingale cannot but affect the child that grows up under their sway, and lead us to expect that that child would come out in a different character to the one that is used to nothing but the sight of Shoreditch Church and the alleys that reticulate the border lands of Bishopsgate Street.

In the same way I look at Durham as offering very peculiar distinctive advantages to the workman who plies his daily task beneath the shadow of its walls, over and above the advantages that can be gained by the operative of Manchester, who knows but little of the loveliness of nature beyond the Sunday walk in the fields that surround the cotton capital of the world.

The view of your ancient church and the mode in which it sits enthroned upon its colossal pile of rock; the sweep of the majestic river; the deep woods that so beautifully fringe the Wear; the low green valleys that trend away on either side, carrying the eye of the spectator easily and pleasantly from the magnificent to the lovely and the quiet; all this alone must tend to affect the mind of the operative and the character of the youth whose education is to be received in the city of which I speak.

But added to this, the work of art is by no means to be passed by. The structure of the Cathedral, those stupendous columns, that vast and sublime nave, and the light and frail loveliness of the Galilee Chapel, the ancient traditions connected with ecclesiastical story mixed up so closely with them all, if duly brought to bear by those to whom the work of moral education is intrusted, on the minds of the intelligent people around you—surely with their historic associations could not fail to influence the workmen to whom I refer.

But when over and above these two features of your city I see the signs of vast endowments, which the piety or the philanthropy of days gone by have liberally flung over the city; when I am told of the wealth and the almost incredible revenue at the command of your ecclesiastical body and of those entrusted with the education of the youth of the north in connection with Durham University, I am bound to believe, that in the hands of men of personal piety, intelligence and earnest desire to promote the welfare of their fellow-creature, there would be no appliance held back which could possibly tend to benefit the multitudes, whose well-being was surely intended by the founders. In fact it would be simple irony to ask the question, whether a body so framed as that, whose members occupy the seats of your ecclesiastical institutions and direct the education of your University, does not throw itself heartily and earnestly into the work of the general education of the young and intelligent adults in the city of Durham. To suppose that they did not do so would be to suppose that they are what they cannot be—men whose actions are inconsistent with their professions, who care more for their respectability and place in society,

than for wielding conscientiously the powers which God and man have bestowed upon them and that they are using the influence which has been committed to them in the capacity of stewards, as if they were masters and irresponsible lords over God's heritage. God forbid that this should be the case with that illustrious and far-famed society; a body composed of men, who I am bound to feel from more than one volume which has been indited by their intelligence would be the first to fall in with the cry which is raised so frequently around us now-a-days, that the cathedral bodies should either show that they are leavening the masses that have grown up around the shadows of the respective minsters of our Church in England, or that they should cede their place as stewards who from an unpardonable prejudice or a worse lack of conscientiousness have wasted their lord's money, or done more, deceitfully and dishonourably applied it.

These three advantages, then, I notice as a cursory visitor to your important city, in the arrangements of nature, the forms and powers of art, and in the institutions founded by the benevolence and intelligence of our ancestors.

Such being my impression, my dear sirs, in which I feel sure you will agree with me, I proceed to discuss more at length the attitude occupied by your own workmen.

A few weeks ago the operatives in your carpet works invited me to address them in a shed of their factory. By your great kindness the shed was left for themselves to arrange at their own expense and ingenuity. An admirable arrangement was made, and I never remember to have spoken to a body of five hundred people with greater satisfaction than I did that evening, on which occasion one of your own firm came forward with so much warmth and earnestness to address your men, and was received so enthusiastically by them, honourable alike to yourselves and to those over whom you exercise control. The meeting to which I refer led to further intercourse with some of the more intelligent operatives in private, from whom I gained several points of important information, on which I base some of the inquiries and suggestions which I proceed to make in the following pages. These interviews resulted in a second meeting in the Town Hall of Durham, which was obtained for the purpose by your workmen and was very well filled on the evening on which I came down a second time to speak to them.

What I noticed in your men generally struck me much. I saw a large amount of intelligence, and in some instances an extraordinary degree of what I might almost call precocious power. I found this in more instances than one, a fact which led me to feel that in common at least with some of the more important and remarkable bodies of our English workmen the Durham carpet operative will take a high rank.

But, added to this, I think I may say that I have seldom found

a greater amount of real affection and heart than I have amongst the men connected with your operations. I have found much intelligence and kindness amongst the cloth manufacturers of Leeds, and other parts of Yorkshire, but I was much struck with the thorough good will shown by the carpet operatives of Durham in their great heartiness to receive any one who came forward as their friend, and the way in which they yearned after and valued the expressions of sympathy from their fellow-man.

These are certainly features, which when combined, cannot but tend to produce an interesting character; indeed I hardly ever expect to come across a body of men who more demanded one's admiration and affection, than those connected with the work of which I am speaking. I hope that if it pleases God to spare my life and give me opportunity I may have many more occasions in which I may be connected with them. To meet such men is indeed refreshing and inciting to all one's energies in life, and a man's most honest desire would be to reciprocate the benefit which they have granted to him. I do not know that I shall be able directly to point out any further very distinctive feature in the carpet manufacturers of Durham over and above the clothiers of Yorkshire, but in the course of the following observations I may have to make remarks which will tend to bring out indirectly certain peculiar features that belong to them, which I am the more anxious, as I said before, to define and ascertain as clearly as possible, since the remedial process should ever be proportioned to the subject matter to which it is applied.

3. I will, therefore, leaving the accidental reference to these features of character, proceed at once to make the suggestions, and ask the questions which to a certain degree may belong to operatives generally, but nevertheless were immediately suggested to my own mind by conversations with yourselves and observations of men in your employ across whom I came.

a. First, I gathered from three or four of your men a strong view that they had imbibed with regard to strikes generally and the weapons by which the tendency to strikes should be assailed. For instance, I find on reference to the notes of a conversation taken with one of your leading men an opinion put forward, "that all strikes were the work of the less intelligent amongst the workmen dragging after them almost inevitably the more intelligent, who nevertheless dissatisfied with the existing state of things, were keenly sensitive to the impropriety and the inexpediency of this particular remedy."

Secondly, I found that one objection which was raised to the system of strikes was based upon the continual bitterness and acrimony created between the master and man, and that not only at the time of the strike itself, but for a long time afterwards, so that the bickerings and heart-burnings, disputes and suspicions engendered by them were subjects of the deepest regret to those

who ably advocated the importance of doing everything to suppress them.

Thirdly; the inevitable ruin that falls upon the men who joined the strike was a reason for which my friend condemned them. He told me a touching tale in illustration of what he urged when he spoke of a carpet operative of intelligence whom he had known some years ago, able to earn a considerable wage, who owing to throwing himself recklessly into a strike, was beaten out of house and home with his wife and children, wandered from town to town in Scotland until at last he had changed a house for a lodging, a lodging for a cellar, his own furniture for the miserable arrangements of a hired abode, and those for the straw bed and scarcely a chair to sit on. He told me how he had as the result of his imprudence to watch the gradual decay of health in his wife and children and to follow them to an untimely grave, and himself altogether to disappear from the cognizance of his friends, ashamed to meet the eye of those before whom he had been compelled to quail.

That tale, my friend assured me, was one which fairly illustrates the result of most strikes, where, too often, the intelligent and best operatives are carried away in the stream whose impetus is lashed to foam by the violence of the worst portion of the workmen, and in whose impetuous torrent are too often borne away those who with not sufficient care avoid the danger.

He again suggested to me that one of the great evils of strikes arose from the certainty of their glutting the labour market and creating so large a body of workmen in the same trade with those who strike as to make the master in the end more than ever independent of the men, thus preventing the very end which they desired to bring about.

Now I do not put forward these four or five reasons for condemning the strike amongst operatives for the purpose of telling you what you must know a thousand times better than myself, but only to base upon them one or two questions and suggestions.

If the above be the great evils of the strike system, is it not possible that the grievances of the workmen, and the supposed rights of the master might be brought to the bar of something like public opinion even amongst their own body by the intelligent among them, by which means the workmen who really are possessed of wisdom and prudence would have an influential voice in the matter, instead of as in so many of these cases, the whole power being in the hands of the uneducated and very often the profligate; and could not some opportunity be given to enable the powers of moral suasion to be brought to bear in the place of the aggravating and distressing agitation that we have so often of late been compelled to witness in the north?

The crying evil seems to be that where very likely there are grievances, a reckless defiance of every simple rule of political

economy, mere brute passions as means of self-defence are the only weapons that are used, and owing to the great preponderance of the second and third rates of character which make up the body of workmen, those who are really intelligent and earnest-minded are compelled either to sit quiet or to be carried away by the stream they cannot resist; and the hope of real and satisfactory result is torn up by the roots. If this view be the true one, is not the man whose vocation is rather the study of the mind and the moral character of the human being the person who might suggest remedies as well at least as he who is more immediately versed in the technicalities of business and of trade? Is not this a question carried into the region of morals? I will show presently more immediately the point I am driving at.

b. I now pass on to another branch of the information that I gathered in conversation with your men, and on which again I should wish to build an hypothesis for you either to confirm or destroy.

I am the more induced to urge this view with regard to strikes, because I notice in the report of the Commissioners appointed to investigate the history of those disastrous outbreaks, which inflicted such great calamity on the operative population of the north some years since, that some remarkable statements were made with regard to the workmen connected with the carpet trade especially at Durham.

I find, for instance, that a Mr. Andrews, who I understand came up from your manufactory, when questioned before the Select Committee of the House of Commons stated that a feeling was very general in favour of the influence of the master being exercised for the moral and social well-being of the people, independently of their position as mere workmen, as a remedy against strikes. "When a strike took place," he says, "in the cotton manufacture of Manchester some time in the earlier part of last year, the workmen of our great factory at Durham got up an address to the workmen of Manchester, showing the singularly good feeling which always existed in the carpet trade over and above other trades, and particularly illustrating the good feeling in the minds and conduct of the masters in that trade." This address, as we are told, showed the position of the men, namely, that during sixteen years they had not had one reduction of wages; at that day they had a ten per cent. advance, and they earnestly recommended others to wait on their employers and endeavour to bring about an arbitration, and to have their disputes settled in this manner.

Now, if this state of things was effected through the instrumentality of the masters' kindness and benevolent interest in the condition of their men, I ask the question, which every ordinary observer would naturally ask who knew as little as myself of the more technical questions mixed up with trade, why, if you have been able to promote so happy a condition of harmony and good will

among the men occupied beneath your roof, should not the same influences be brought to bear to ameliorate the conditions of men who are concerned in similar works in different parts of the kingdom: and would not this result in averting the formation of unions for strikes? simply because it would give to the men an impression of an earnest desire existing to do them good, and would win the sympathy rather of the intelligent workmen than the unintelligent and uneducated, and thereby throw power into the hands of those who are most likely to exercise it judiciously and to promote the real interests of their fellow workmen.

Now, gentlemen, in connexion with this thought I remember that one of your firm in a shed at your own factory, in the presence of your men, made a statement which, I think, had been suggested by the men themselves, that one very effective method that you had adopted by which strikes had been avoided and your men conciliated was the inviting the leading manufacturers to meet together to consider how strikes might be prevented. Mr. William Henderson of Durham, Mr. Cooke of Millbridge, Mr. Crossley of Halifax, and the late Mr. Howard of Leeds met together to form an association of the carpet manufacturers of the North of England. This meeting took place at Barnard Castle in the year 1839, and they drew up a bond of union binding themselves under a heavy penalty to produce an equalization of wages, and agreeing that no master should be allowed to reduce below that scale without the consent of the whole. A more benevolent and just association I scarcely ever read of.

But I find further, that after this meeting had broken up, the work people of the different works were called together and the masters of the different firms told their workmen that they expected them to promise, that the association of operatives, which was established especially for the purpose of strikes, should be broken up. The announcement produced a very hostile spirit.

Before this time the operatives were by no means on good terms with their employers, and on the announcement of the Barnard Castle meeting bad results were at first expected; but the masters pledging themselves that there should be no reduction of wages, and that they would endeavour to prevent that reduction in any particular firm, greater tranquillity was produced.

The system went on quietly till 1843, when a firm not connected with the Masters' Association required a reduction of ten per cent.; it was an extensive carpet manufactory with perhaps two hundred men employed in it; the operatives of England and Scotland raised money for the purpose of enabling the men to strike—and a strike ensued. After it had existed eight months the masters held another meeting, sent a deputation to the manufacturers whose men had struck to propose terms between them and their operatives. They were successful in their generous effort.

This meeting of the masters has continued on the first Thursday in July in each year. There is a chairman, and delegates of the different bodies of workmen; I find that these delegates are authorized to place before the attention of the masters the complaints of the men that they may be immediately examined into, discussed and remedied, should it be thought consistent with the rules of equity and humanity.

The first application that was made was for an advance of wages, and this was given. The delegates showed reason why a certain kind of work should receive an increase of wages on account of some increased difficulty in the manufacture, and the masters granted it; two years after there was a request for a further advance, and it was again acceded to. Another request was made, which not being thought to be just, was refused, and no strike ensued. The masters explained freely to the men the circumstances which induced them to refuse it, and the men accepted their statements patiently and approvingly.

All strikes about wages have since been determined by this association. During the time it has been in operation there have been five strikes in the carpet trade unconnected with the association and all these have been settled by the joint effort of the masters and the men. When a firm not connected with the Masters' Association refuses to give the wages, the associated masters and men join together and lay on so much a week on each man to make up the sum to the men on strike and the allowances are according to the number of the family: the young men eight shillings a week, the married men ten shillings, and one shilling and sixpence for each child during the strike. The masters and men in this association have always acted in unison, because if the masters out of the association were to reduce the wages, the wages of the whole trade must be reduced at the same time, or they could not go on.

Now I will go no further into this highly interesting matter at the present moment. It will be found by any of my readers in the evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Commons upon Masters and Operatives. This, surely, shows the efficiency of an approach of the masters towards the men with the view of deprecating the false political economy and averting the miserable moral and social paralysis ensuing upon the men taking the law into their own hands, ignorant of the real value of capital, and the relative value of labour; and over and above this, opening as it were a court at which the really intelligent and well intentioned of their operatives can plead their grievances rightly or wrongly supposed, and gain redress where they deserve redress. This alone shows how beneficial any effort will be which shall tend to bring to bear moral suasion on the operative, and a consciousness of sympathy with his position as a human being in the mind of the master over and above the present disastrous method which

is adopted simply on the hypothesis that the master cares no more for the men than he does for the feelings of the steel that forms the wheels or the handles of his machinery.

I suggested at the meeting in the Town Hall at Durham, as a part of a plan which might be remedial of the condition of the operative class, that some opportunity should be offered to the various operatives of the different working communities of England to meet through their intelligent and best principled representatives to suggest their own supposed grievances and to bring them by that means to the bar of public opinion ; to give them the opportunity of free discussion and to enable the masters in all good temper and conciliatory good will to appreciate the difficulties of the men. Why should not that be ? Why should there not be some such annual meeting made up of the representative delegates of these bodies, who shall freely, honestly, good-temperedly, and with trust and confidence in those over them discuss and either indorse or repudiate the impressions of ill-usage and oppression from the masters ?

Another reason why I attach importance to this portion of the Report before the Select Committee is, that it seems to do what I suggested somewhere above, namely, give a distinctive feature not only to the carpet weaver in general, but to the Durham carpet weaver in particular ; it seems to speak for an amount of intelligence or moral worth in them, and of the ascendancy of the higher portions of their community over the worse in influencing their councils and directing their will, which I do not know exists in any other community of so much importance and manufacturing energy and talent in England or Scotland.

While on this head, it may be as well to refer to another point in a great degree related to it, namely, the importance of giving to the men some opportunity of expressing their thoughts through the instrumentality of other processes besides that of public speech and discussion. We have at this moment a widespread and successful penny and daily press, which represents every phase of political opinion and has its own amount of influence over these men, in proportion as they fall under its sway.

The present very cheap press gives wonderful facility to the working men to give vent to their feelings with regard to supposed wrongs in the reduction of wages or acts of unkindness from the master. A newspaper written for the operative alone might, and probably would, degenerate into a purely political engine. I have seen a number of a small magazine called "The Northern Messenger," which appears well calculated to further this object.

I am by no means blind to the great difficulties which might arise in carrying this out ; but I am asking you whether those difficulties might not pass away before the energies of men who are really interested in the wellbeing of the operative body. We all

know well how the suppression of free speech has become like the closing of the crater of a volcano, simply the means of making the explosion at last ten times more tremendous still. We all know the "way to escape" that is open to those who are able to give utterance to their thoughts and complaints, which saves, how much heart-burning, how many misunderstandings and what an amount of fostered and cherished animosity ! We all know in our own free and noble country, how much we owe to that independent and manly expression of opinion through the organs of the daily press, which has prevented our being co-mates with the sorrowers in Neapolitan dungeons or the weeping conscripts of Austrian armies.

It is on this account that for us no links have been forged which are to clank in the fetters of servitude and that the cry which is first heard by every child that is born into membership with our British communion is the cry of a noble and universal emancipation. How little should we be able to boast of those glorious and blessed heritages, if the sorrows of our people were pent up in the caverns of their own hearts without free vent and expression ! Give to the operative, possessed as he is of intelligence, knowledge, experience, and thought, the credit also of having some desire to act rightly and a large amount of indignation at dishonest or tyrannical practice. Give to him every facility, should he lack the loftiest powers of education that you yourselves may enjoy, to utter his thoughts through his own peculiar channel and lend a kindly and attentive ear to those expressions, however inarticulate or faltering. Surely in proportion as you do this, the internal anguish will be to a great degree soothed, the pent-up storms of passion and indignation will find their way out into the realm of intelligence and consciousness of freedom, and that which seemed just now bursting into the thunders of the storm will become the gentle and inaudible whispers of an evening wind.

And yet we are told by men who should know better, that it is absurd to suggest to these heaving masses any safety-valves for the expression of their opinion. We are told in sentences really almost ludicrous that the working man does not realise or feel that he is of much importance among the great population of his country or that he throws any considerable weight into the balance of her destinies. We are told that no trash can be greater than that which is talked about giving them the opportunities of expression, before even they have gained the very scantiest knowledge—What ! when men have risen beneath the shadow of the factory, ay, and when at this moment, if I have heard truly, within the walls of your own factory, there are men who have by a continual application of powers with which providence has gifted them, and of high mechanical genius, invented power of machinery which not only will benefit their own career through life, not only facilitate the trade and the commerce of their native land, but enable them to walk in the

rear of that army in the van of which are receding over the brow of the hill Harvey, Arkwright, and Davy : shall we say, that there are not men who, though they may not be able to appreciate a particular volume on Church History or a particular treatise on scholastic Greek, should yet have the opportunity of expressing their opinions about their daily craft ? Are we to conceive that the whole of human knowledge and experience is to be cut by one knife and into one shape, and that to be weighed and determined by the narrow traditions of university or ecclesiastical lore ? No, this will not do, we must treat men as we find them ; and if one mode of expression is not in the power of those to whom I have been referring, give them the opportunity to express themselves after their own fashion. Impress upon them the convictions of your own wide and unhesitating sympathy, and I believe that alike through the instrumentality of the Masters' Union, and through the bringing to the bar of public opinion for the sake of free discussion the wrongs of the master and the rights of the men and with this the opportunity offered to the operative to express his feelings through the medium of the press or the treatise, you may do more than through many other processes adopted to arrest the fatal progress of the strike and to elevate in tone and principle that most influential portion of your fellow-countrymen, the operatives and the workmen of the north.

Is it not true that, in the most important operative districts in the North of England there is a bitterness between the master and the man that seems to be almost hopeless ? Does not this antagonism exist in such a manner as to destroy all confidence in each other ? And might not this bitterness be to a great degree softened and toned down, if masters would consent to recognise some such opportunity being offered to their men of expressing their opinions freely and openly, and were by their own conduct to show to their workmen that they do really desire their benefit, elevation, and recognition in the ranks of English society ? I feel that I am not taxing too far your powers of sympathy in this matter when I call to mind a circumstance that I trust I shall not forget,—the presence of your Mr. William Henderson amongst your workmen at a meeting in Durham held in the early part of last November, when, if I remember rightly, he then told them that it was your conviction that the great reason of the success which they attributed to your influence over the operatives connected with your carpet-works, was the fact of your having shown a strong desire to let the men on all occasions have a free expression of their opinions, and to put that expression forward under the belief that they would gain a fair, liberal, and a candid hearing. And, if this be the case, can there be any reasonable objection to the urging, through every means in our power, the establishment of some such social meeting ?

There is one point that strikes me as interesting on this matter, and that is, how far any such opportunity being offered as I have suggested could prevent the evils that arise, almost of necessity, from the inequality of wages, and the variety of prices in the market of different kinds of produce. These wages, I imagine, must alter from time to time. Wages, like every other mercantile arrangement, must depend on circumstances; and if trade is prosperous, and wool cheap, masters will be able to give higher wages than when wool is dear and trade flat. A dull trade and high-priced wool will have a material effect on the price of wages. Other circumstances over and above this may affect the rate of wages, so as to make it unreasonable to keep them up to a certain point. I find, from the report of your own workmen, that some time before the parliamentary commission to which I have had occasion more than once to refer, the masters who were not connected with the Association formed at Barnard Castle reduced their men's wages: the men in the Association never contemplated that their masters would keep the wages up, and instead of making the least complaint they were quite willing they should be reduced in order to meet the other manufacturers in the market.

Now this speaks wonderful things for the result of this mode of operation, when it appears that not only that most embittering and exasperating of all questions on the mind of the operative,—the variety of wages and the false estimate, very often, of his own powers of labour compared with the application of capital to him—has been toned down, but that over and above that no irritability was shown towards masters in the Association, and that the operative himself seems all but to have suggested the reduction of his own wages in order that a fair equilibrium might be restored in the market generally.

This seems to me to be so just, fair, and simple a mode of action, that any method which could be adopted that could tend to bring out such a subject is one that every philanthropist and friend to the working orders should promote to the utmost of his power and influence.

I find that Mr. Andrews tells us very clearly that it was not in the power or province of this Court to settle the price that was to be given for certain work; but that it would be only when disputes arose between master and men, which, under the present state of circumstances would ordinarily lead to a strike, the aggrieved party might demand an arbitration on the question in dispute, and both parties be bound by the award of the arbitrator. For instance: if a master offered to reduce wages five per cent., and the workmen refused to assent, as the law now stands (referring to the year 1856, which I am doing), the result is a strike; but if the men had a right to say they would not accept the terms, but would submit the question to arbitration, and the men appointed one arbi-

trator and the master another, and the two sat on the case, heard the evidence and gave their judgment, there would by no possibility be a strike.

Perhaps I have said enough upon this question. I feel that, in making any suggestions upon it, I can do so but with one view, namely, that I should take the sentiments of men who are connected with the trade, and who, I may suppose, understand the political economy of the matter, as the basis on which to construct an edifice of moral and social arrangement, which falls more immediately within the scope of those who outside the works are interested in the condition of the working men.

c. In days gone by did not those companies of working men which were formed together into guilds take something of the form that I am now urging? Men met together in the bonds of brotherhood and fraternity. They felt bound to stand by each other in the days of adversity or difficulty; rejoiced with each other's prosperity, and shed kindred tears with each other's adversity. Even their attachment to families was not sufficiently strong to snap the bond which connected them with mates of the same occupation. These guilds, if I mistake not, were often framed upon religious or at least highly moral laws, were recognised by the employer and were felt to be one of the great preservatives against those disastrous results which, in our day of rapidly-increasing population, the complications and intricacies in the rights of capital and the wrongs of labour are threatening to bring about by the subversion of some of the most important of our social institutions, and to hinder the advance of that civilisation which we had hoped was rapidly approaching its consummation in the land.

It might be well to call the attention of every one interested in this matter to the question of the formation of these guilds. I am not one of those who can imagine that the machinery which was found efficient for the small bodies of society in the reign of the First or Second Tudor, cannot be—if it was really what it professed to be, viz. founded upon the highest laws of religion and the positive wants of mankind—so extended and made elastic so as to meet the case of the masses and millions of the present age. God, inasmuch as He made the human race, became not only their Creator, but their moral Governor; and knowing the beings that He had thus formed, He surrounded them with everything that could develop the powers that He had created in germ, and bring to their final development those energies that He had set in motion for eternal happiness. Surely none of those plans and institutions which were at one time evidently recognised as under His favour,—which tended to keep the man by the side of his brother and to reconcile the conflicting interest of employers and employed,—can be without a substitute and representative in an age like ours, when Manchester has overlapped the borders of its stream, within whose

narrow channel it was shrunk up two hundred and fifty years ago, in such a manner as to make us smile when we watch the impetuous torrent that has now left no trace of the original shore? I read that Leeds in the year 1685 consisted—and made a boast of it at the time—of a population of 7,000; it has within less than two hundred years raised that population to 200,000. I cannot conceive that, while this is the case with every intelligent and energetic town of the empire, there are not with the diseases remedies sufficient to meet them; and growing up by the side of that power which has suggested and invented machinery an intelligence sufficiently keen and perseverance sufficiently laborious to meet the case of the nineteenth century, as the energies of men originally met the case of the seventeenth.

4. A further question I wish to ask with regard to the condition of the workman, and which has been brought before my notice especially by my visit to Durham and your factory is this, —whether the one object which, above all others, the working man of this age yearns after be not sympathy? I know that sympathy is the highest gift that man can bestow upon his fellow man, and that it is by no means the single claim of the workman that he shall have the fellow-feeling and interest of those around him. But I think I am not far wrong when I say that there are no men, as a class, in this country that yearn after that sympathy more. And this is very easily explained. In a great many of the Northern districts Socialism and some of the more subtle forms of Rationalism have tended to sap the foundations of Christianity and to shake in consequence the edifice of social and political truth.

Several names of rationalistic teachers are rife amongst the men, and when speaking of those names and of those who value them, it seems that to the conscious sympathy offered by such men as Robert Owen and Holyoake, and the occasional lack of sympathy shown to the workmen by professing Christian teachers, is to be attributed much evil.

If sympathy be the key by which we unlock the door of the human heart; if it be the sunbeam that warmer than any other will thaw the ice bound like iron around the affections and energies pent up within and only needing such genial influence to enable them to rill forth fertilizing and gladdening all around; if this be the case is it likely that the Church in England will ever gain her true position amongst this very influential body, if she is to neglect to make use of so powerful an instrument, while around her are enemies or hesitating friends occupying theirs with so much and such evident success?

a. Taking it for granted that the boon which every man asks of his brother is especially that of sympathy, the working man of England seems above all other portions of the population to demand it and to expect it. It is to his labour that the commercial

attitude of our great country is to a considerable degree owing. He often invents and the man of capital gains the credit of the invention. The machinery that so successfully takes the place of labour, has very often been elaborated through watchful days and wakeful nights by a man who returns to his room to grudge himself the food necessary for his toil, that he may save through a quarter of a century sufficient to construct the machine to gain his patent. He may, as in more than one celebrated instance, see the hope finally flit like a phantom before his eyes, another elaborate his design, making its honour and success his own, and leave to the true inventor an unhonoured and forgotten name. Surely this feature of our operative population alone demands the greatest sympathy from us. Their continual application to the work in hand, their experience of all the difficulties involved in carrying it out, the intelligence which on all sides is acknowledged to be their inheritance, no doubt brought about by the friction of mind with substantive objects which makes them the men who are more likely than any others to create and give fresh impetus to that power of machinery on which our great commercial name rests,—all this demands our sympathy.

b. But again the working man deserves our regard from the fact that he is struggling from a condition in society to which in one sense he was not born and to which either the narrow-mindedness, or to attribute a worse motive, the jealous dread of having another tread upon their heels, the working man will be confined by those who are placed in ranks above him. It is to the struggling that we yield sympathy, not to him that has gained his position. It is to the drowning mariner that we extend the hand of salvation, not to him that has already reached the shore. It is to the youth who struggles with crippled limb and emaciated form to earn a sustenance for a widowed mother, that we yield the widest as well as the dearest of our heart's affections, rather than to him who gifted with every bounty of a beneficent providence finds it nothing more than to ask to receive liberally all he desires.

Do not these men by their very attitude expect our interest in a way in which no other portion of the population do who either have gained a position that we cannot better, or are not possessed of that mental power nor received that mental culture which may make them value or struggle after the crown so often denied them?

c. There is a third reason why these classes peculiarly want our sympathies. In proportion as the intellectual force has been increased the powers of feeling and affection have been equally increased. We cannot develope one portion of the human being without the other. It is a monster that is produced by only a single developement. If a man is gifted with the power of gratitude, and his intellect is developed by a certain form of occupation, by the side of that intellect the germ of gratitude will grow up

also. If there be to that intellect an object offered worthy of its power, the intellect will feed on and be satisfied with that object; but if there be no such object offered to the germ of gratitude that springs by its side it will take an adverse direction and in the end the power that might have in its finished act become gratitude becomes the deepest and the most indignant of ingratitude. You cannot develop the intellectual without at the same time intensifying the moral and the sensitive nature.

If this, then, be the case, and what I have stated with regard to the former of those natures be true in regard to the operative, what vast energies of affection, what powers of tenacious dependence, what keen eyes fixed upon the moral guide and teacher, what boundless and fathomless forces of gratitude are theirs, and how magnificent would be the application of any system which was suited to meet all this, if it were applied by men who not only appreciated the system that they worked, but were delighted that the result should be what I am urging—sympathy! That system is the Church.

But, again, the working man seems especially to need this aid from every one who cares for him, inasmuch as he practically shows, that if one man will not give it him he will seize it from another, and that if he is denied it by systems of truth he will make it his own by appropriating systems of error; and to bring these remarks to their practical point, that if the ministers of the Church of England are too nice,—if the members of our great ecclesiastical bodies in the large cities and towns of this country are too respectable,—if the Clergy of our various parishes are too much incrustated with the frost of university life,—if our town Clergy are too much occupied with the secularities of their position,—it simply comes to this, that they willingly give over, bound hand and foot, the most noble of the populations of God to the rationalism or the socialism of the atheistic teachers of the day.

5. This brings me at once and easily to a point of which I wish to ask you a little further.

First, I have more than once asked of men occupying your position, whether it were possible to bring any immediate religious or moral instruction to bear upon the various populations which work under the roof of a given factory. I have generally, if not always met with the same objection, that the operatives cannot be considered in any other light than simply that of workmen working for so much money,—that any recognition of distinct relationship in any other capacity than that of the mere employment between the master and the men would excite endless misunderstanding and causes of annoyance between the two bodies.

Secondly, that the fact of the great variety of opinions represented in bodies of workmen, some belonging to the Church of England and some Romanists, so many attached to different forms

of dissent and above all so many altogether refusing to accept Christianity, it would be hopeless to bring any one system of religious instruction in any way to bear upon them.

Therefore it seems that in many cases the workman is given over to a state of hopeless ignorance with regard to the loftiest destinies of his existence; and this when a vast opportunity is offered by the mere fact of their congregation at one locality, and to a certain degree being under an individual influence in such a manner as scarcely any other body of men in the country is.

I gather, nevertheless, that you have successfully attempted some operations of the kind that I refer to; you have worked some system of night-schools, in which the men and youths who are employed in your particular factory receive the benefit of evening education; that you are, more than this, hoping to extend the teaching further by establishing a system of entertainments of an instructive and popular nature in the form of lectures and so forth, which may not only relieve and recreate the mind after the labour of the day, but give to the workmen connected with your factory an associated character, which one would hope to result not only in personal benefit to themselves, but very considerably in healing those differences arising so often from suspicion between the employed and the employer.

All this strikes me as very important. That any one firm, of experience and caution should have thrown out such a scheme and begun in the very smallest way to work it, and that with the evident result falling under my own eye of the gratitude evinced by the men whom you are trying to benefit, is a reason to make me conceive that such a scheme might be worked with the greatest benefit in other smaller bodies of the kingdom.

I asked this question in a previous letter that I addressed on the subject of the operatives of the North and received for answer from some of those to whom I sent it statements which implied incredulity of success in that mode of operation; while at the same time in two or three cases I discovered that the effort had been made such as you have attempted and with the same kind of result.

Now, may I ask you, have you any intention of carrying out further this kind of operation? do you conceive that it would be possible to extend it so much as to bring the workmen together for distinct religious services of some sort, not only on the Sunday, but on the week-day?—I mean by offering of prayers in some shed connected with the factory in the morning and evening for all those who are willing to attend for the space of five minutes; and on Sundays by having a more elaborate service with earnest and well-adjusted addresses to those who might be willing to come together? If so, of course it would be needful to have the right man in the way of a chaplain. If it be at all within your intention do you see any of those difficulties before you which I have just now men-

tioned as so frequently put forward by other masters? Are they indeed insuperable? Is there no common ground on which we can meet the operatives in England and hope to win over to Christianity men who have begun to hesitate about its truth? Is there no such force, no such exercise of the sympathy which I spoke of just now, as to lead us to believe that it would be a formidable weapon of warfare in battering down the middle walls of partition that exist between man and man? Is it indeed the case that suspicion is so keen and lively on the part of the employed, that they can by no means be brought to believe that the employer intends well, or otherwise than to exercise an undue control over their liberty of thought and conscience when he even breathes a word about the moral or religious wellbeing of his people? If such a system of operation could be brought into practice, how large surely might be the benefit! how amazing the remedy which would be brought to bear to prevent some of those disastrous exhibitions of hostility and animosity that we have seen in some of the great factory districts of the North. Christianity has been looked upon for many ages as the great softening and healing power of mankind. We have been told over and over again that Christianity marching in the vanguard of advancing civilisation tends more than any other influence to break down barriers and to draw together others that would stand far apart. We have heard of it as a beautiful and beneficent power, soothing the hatred of the savage and cooling the burning passions of Eastern tribes. We have heard of it as an illuminated atmosphere which has shed a lustre upon all those who have lived and moved under its influence. We have heard of it as making one the dark African and the sallow inhabitant of the Pacific, and enabling them to feel that there is for them a recognised brotherhood with the more intelligent, though hitherto proud and reserved European. We have heard of it as able to make men forget every other conceivable difference. Before its magic wand have disappeared the centuries of time and the vast distances of space. If, then, the world has yielded to its force,—if prejudices which have been deeply engrafted into the very trunk of human nature have been held by its influence,—if it has been the successful philosophy which has answered the deep inquiries and satisfied the yearnings of the human mind and soul, why cannot it be brought practically to bear on so small a sphere comparatively, and so natural an opportunity as that presented by a body of men working under the direction of a single employer under one roof, who have a direct and personal interest in the operations of each other and of the master.

I should indeed hail the day when men like yourselves will march in the vanguard of this kind of improvement; and should count it amongst the noblest triumphs of the application of Christian education in this country, if the masters were to come forward and

demand of the Bishops and the clergy of England means to meet the cases of their hundreds and thousands of workmen. It would be a glorious dawn preparing for a brighter day for the English Church if those operative classes could be brought within its influence ; and such a request put forward by men in your attitude must receive the attention of every person in spiritual and ecclesiastical position in the English Church, must pave the way to an increased amount of existing machinery and of a new kind of machinery altogether, and must call forth a class of clergymen suited to this peculiar mode of fulfilling their vocation, who will be the right men in the right place.

I know that we are told on all sides that we overrate the attitude of the operative. We are told that education has gone too far ; that it is impossible without the danger of being charged with dogmatism and illiberality even to urge the blessed Name of our LORD, which nevertheless the very objector professes to love, upon those who work for us.

Such statements sometimes come from men who hold the lamp in their hands which was given them to illumine the darkened pathway of the multitude and while they hold it only permit its light to fall upon their own footsteps and to enrich themselves by the discoveries which it enables them to make—when it is by such men that these objections are raised, are not their words, their opinions and their arguments to be set at nought before the sounder reasoning of universal philanthropy and exalted Christianity ?

6. Since writing the above, I have received a letter written by one of your operatives, to whom I have had to make reference in the past pages, as showing so much intelligence and mastery of the subject before the Committee of the Houses of Parliament.

He seems in the letter to deplore the many evils that have hitherto existed in the comparative position of master and man. But while he does this he is evidently a thoughtful person, and bases his complaints upon no inferior or floating grounds.

He expresses in the letter great confidence in that union of masters at Barnard Castle to which I had occasion to refer. He deprecates the union of the men throughout the country against the masters in such a manner as to lead every workman to throw himself upon the support of his colleagues, or of those who in other districts are employed at similar manufactures so as in a short time to create an unreal and fatal dependence ; and by so doing to impoverish the condition of those who are flown to as the refuge. The long and short of this appears to be in the estimation of the writer of the letter that nothing is more injurious to the true interest of the working man than that he should realize his only safeguard to lie in the power of united action against the employer, that such a line is injurious to the interest of the workman, inas-

much as it creates a false dependence and tends in the long run to embitter feeling between two classes which of necessity must work together before any good result can ensue. Capital must be the parent and protection of labour, while labour must be the opportunity for the use of capital. He deprecates a system which tends to glut the labour market—for if the labourer by his acts leaves capital to lie idle, the master will of necessity find if he can (and he can find) other labourers to bring into the market; and over and above all this he notices the disastrous effect of a continued and unhealed wound existing in the relationship of two of the most important bodies of the society of our commercial empire.

He mentions with great satisfaction the opportunity that was offered at your institution to the men engaged in the carpet work at Durham and other trades of similar occupation, to come forward at a given time and place, to lay their complaints, whatever they might be, before the board, the masters assuring the workmen that those complaints would be fairly attended to, and that if possible, a remedy would be proposed.

He attributes the well-being of your large body of operatives in a great degree to your own exertions within the walls of the factory; to the library, which you initiated and support, the volumes of which are confined to the use of those who work in your sheds; to the establishment lately of night-schools, expressly for your own workpeople both old and young, and to the efforts that you have made to promote a certain social intercourse between yourselves and those under your charge.

I cannot read the letter without feeling that it reflects honourably on the writer, showing him to be a man of intelligence. He sees that the real remedy for the disease is in the thorough regeneration of the social body; that there may be faults on both sides, and that both must come forward in the healing of the social wound.

I notice in his letter that he thinks the great object should be for the employer to try, as far as he is able, to treat his factory as a family or a fraternity, and to create an *esprit de corps* by founding institutions within the walls which shall be exclusively confined to those immediately in his employ.

I hear that some others have followed your example. I cannot but feel that it is to you, and such as you, that England will owe, if God spares you time to develop your ideas and full opportunity and scope for their expression, that we shall owe one of the great solutions to the vast question which is mixed up with the vital interests of our working classes. It is a social and not a political age.

I do not on this occasion pass any opinion upon the rights of enfranchisement or the wrongs of disenfranchisement that we hear so much of in the present day. Whether the working classes will be

benefited or injured by the power of voting for our representative bodies, or whether their exclusion in the proposals of certain legislators be a permanent injury to the rising class, is a question with which I am not at this moment caring to deal. The real remedy lies in the healing of a social wound, in the building up of a social breach: it lies more in the hands of the employer than the legislator, more within the reach of the master and the mill-owner than the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the existing governments of the day.

The true friend of the operative is not he who would fan the flame of political animosity or give energy to the torrent of political ambition, but it is he who convinces the classes amongst whom he moves that the interest of the classes is inseparably connected: that you can no more sever the necessary dependence of capital on labour, and of labour on capital, than you can safely tear the vine from the trellis over which it has climbed, and upon whose support it depends to produce the luxuriant harvest of its fruit. The "coming" and successful man will be he who will show that that universal law of love which a beneficent Creator has founded for the well-being of mankind finds its place alike in the bodies to which I have been referring, as it does in the more minute details of family life or the ordinary relationships of society; and that while this law of love is the only one we can safely fall back upon in its great developements, its many and vast powers of application, we must look upon every party as equally responsible for its breach and for its observance, and hail with the greatest gratitude men who shall be pioneers in that advance, and who, while they go axe in hand clearing away the tangled underwood of intricacies which the false relationships of centuries have permitted to spring up, shall open out new worlds of success, energy, and commercial enterprise by bringing to bear upon them the clear and warm sunshine of reciprocal goodwill and recognition of the laws by which our race has been chartered.

I remain, dear Messrs. Henderson,

Yours very sincerely and gratefully,

EDWARD MONRO.

HARROW WEALD,
May, 1859.

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